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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002788

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MASS](#) [IN](#) [PK](#) [NSSP](#)

SUBJECT: INDIAN LEFT REMAINS ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO US SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE

REF: NEW DELHI 2348

Classified By: Ambassador David C. Mulford, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Most Indian strategic commentators have endorsed the Administration's March 25 South Asia Initiative, and there is an emergency among Indian Communists to speak out.

¶2. (U) Predictably, India's Communists rejected the administration's South Asia Initiative almost immediately after it was announced on March 25. They insist that the US should not buy F-16 fighter aircraft.

¶3. (C) In a series of recent meetings with Poloff, Communist leaders and leftist journalists insisted that the US initiative was "unacceptable".

¶4. (C) Leaders of three LF parties insisted to Poloff that they would not relent on GOI purchase of US fighter aircraft. All-India Forward Bloc General Secretary G. Devarajan emphasized on April 4 that the LF has told PM Singh that GOI acceptance of the America's Defense Minister Mukherjee in the Spotlight.

¶5. (C) Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) General Secretary Abani Roy reiterated to Poloff that the LF was angered by the US initiative, which they believe is a waste of money. Instead, the GOI should scale back defense purchases and channel more money into social spending. Mukherjee reportedly responded that since the US offer is non-negotiable, he will accept it.

¶6. (C) According to Roy, the LF leadership is worried that Mukherjee is not fully with them. Noting that "Mukherjee can't behave one way and think the other," Roy said that the LF is divided on the issue.

¶7. (C) CPI Secretary D. Rajan also confirmed to Poloff on April 6 that the Communists "will not compromise" on the military aspects of the US initiative. He also noted that the Congress's detractors are pressuring him to support the US offer.

¶8. (C) Poloff spoke with two Congress leaders with access to the party leadership and journalists who follow Congress party internal developments.

¶9. (C) In an April 1 meeting, Congress MP Rashid Alvi pointed out that the Communists are pressuring Congress, that the party is divided, and that the US offer is unacceptable. Alvi advised that DefMin Mukherjee will play a key role in the GOI's decision and has not yet come out in favor of the US fighter offer. He also noted that the US offer is non-negotiable.

¶10. (C) On March 31, Congress insider NK Sharma insisted to Poloff that despite strong support for the US Initiative from New Delhi's strata, the announcement of F-16 sales to Pakistan compounded the considerable "anger" within Congress regarding US handling of the situation.

¶11. (C) "Hindu" political editor Harish Khare noted to Poloff that there was "no enthusiasm" for the US arms offer among his Congress contacts.

¶12. (C) Former "India Today" editor Zafar Agha told Poloff on April 8 that his Congress contacts believe that India will become a world leader if it accepts the US offer.

¶13. (C) As in the past, the Communists are determined to oppose the forging of closer US-India strategic ties, as they think they are in a minority position.

MULFORD